

Eachdhroim an áir

04.12.08

Speaking at the launch of **Michael McNally**'s book *The Battle of Aughrim 1691*, last night (03/12/08) at the National Museum, Collins' Barracks, Minister Ó Cuív suggested the development of the battle site as an iconic tourist attraction.

Ag labhairt dó aréir (03/12/08) ag seoladh leabhar **Michael McNally**, *The Battle of Aughrim 1691*, ag Ard-mhúsaem na hÉireann, Dún Uí Choileáin, mhol an tAire Ó Cuív go ndéanfaí forbairt ar an láthair chatha mar ní is díol spéise do thurasóirí.

“Clearly, Aughrim is of strategic importance in our history, and it seems strange that it does not seem to have achieved the same recognition as other, less significant sites. We need to commemorate, understand and appreciate our past. I call for the development of Aughrim Battle Site as an iconic tourist attraction west of the Shannon. I firmly believe that the importance of the Battle of Aughrim should be reassessed in line with the excellent work on the Battle of the Boyne site. We need to open the debate on this with a view to a long-term plan, with involvement of all the relevant partners; as well as the historical expertise, we need the local LEADER company, the local authorities and the appropriate State agencies to work together on this. Most of the cost involved would arise a long time into the future and would be spread over many years. Indeed, Culloden in Scotland is still being preserved and developed over 110 years after preservation began. Aughrim is comparable to Culloden in respect of national strategic importance and its place in the national psyche, although the death-toll at Aughrim was far higher.

“The tourist potential of Aughrim is substantial and the knock-on benefits to the local economy would be significant. Currently visitors to Culloden number well over 300,000 per annum and it makes a very important contribution to the local economy. Interest in military history is growing in Europe and further afield, and I believe that we have something very special here that could be an international attraction.

“I believe that Aughrim can also be a focus for national reconciliation. “Nationalist” Ireland and Ulster unionists need to find common causes so that people can work together on common tasks and get to know each other and build respect. This does not involve surrender by either side. Aughrim is a great cemetery; it contains the remains of the Irish who were left on the field for over a year, some of whom sank into the marsh. It also contains, at unknown sites, burial pits containing the remains of about 2,000 Williamites. A large number of these could well be the remains of the Ulster troops who were in the thick of the fighting. Involving Unionists in the planning and other work involved would increase contacts and normalise the thirty- two county sense of identity, and add to the tremendous good done already by the preservation of the Battle of the Boyne site.”

END

The Battle of Aughrim 1691 - **Michael McNally**

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Battle-Aughrim-1691-Michael-McNally/dp/0752446878>

Battle Of Aughrim Interpretative Centre

Address : Aughrim, Ballinasloe, Co Galway, Republic Of Ireland

Telephone : +353 (0)90 9673939

Date 12 July 1691

Location Near, Aughrim, western Ireland

Result Williamite victory

Battle of Aughrim

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The battle

The battle started with Ginkel trying to assault the open flank of the Jacobite position with cavalry and infantry. This attack ground to a halt after determined Jacobite counter-attacks and the Williamites halted and dug in behind stakes driven into the ground to protect against cavalry. The French Huguenot forces committed here found themselves in low ground exposed to Jacobite fire and took a great number of casualties. Contemporaneous accounts speak of the grass being slippery with blood. To this day, this area on the south flank of the battle is known locally as the "Bloody Hollow". In the centre, the Williamite infantry under Hugh Mackay tried a frontal assault on the Jacobite infantry on Kilcommadan Hill. The Williamite troops, mainly English and Scots, had to take each line of trenches, only to find that the Irish had fallen back and were firing at them from the next line. The Williamite infantry attempted three assaults, the first reached the furthest. Eventually, the final Williamite assault was driven back with heavy losses by cavalry and pursued into the bog, where more of them were killed or drowned. In the rout, the pursuing Jacobites manage to spike a battery of Williamite guns.

This left Ginkel with only one option, to try and force a way through the causeway on the Jacobite left. This should have been an impregnable position, with the attackers concentrated into a narrow lane and covered by the defenders of the castle there. However, the Irish troops there were short on ammunition. Mackay directed this fourth assault, consisting mainly of cavalry, in two groups - one along the causeway and one parallel to the south. The Jacobites stalled this attack with heavy fire from the castle, but then found that their reserve ammunition, which was British made, would not fit into the muzzles of their French supplied muskets. The Williamites then charged again with a reasonably fresh regiment of Anglo-Dutch cavalry under Henri de Massue, faced with only weak musket fire they crossed the causeway and reached Aughrim village with few casualties. A force of Jacobite cavalry under Henry Luttrell was held in reserve to cover this flank. However rather than counterattacking at this point, their commander ordered them to withdraw, following a route now known locally as "Luttrell's pass". Henry Luttrell was alleged to have been in the pay of the Williamites and was assassinated in Dublin after the war [1].

The General Marquis de St Ruth after the third infantry rush on the Williamite position up to their cannons, appeared to believe that the battle could be won and was heard to shout, "they are running, we will chase them back to the gates of Dublin". However, as he tried to rally his cavalry on the left to counter-attack and drive the Williamite horse back, he was decapitated

by a cannon ball. At this point, the Jacobite position collapsed very quickly. Their horsemen, demoralised by the death of their commander, fled the battlefield, leaving the left flank open for the Williamites to funnel more troops into and envelope the Jacobite line. The Jacobites on the right, seeing the situation was hopeless, also began to melt away, although Sarsfield did try to organise a rearguard action. This left the Jacobite infantry on Killcommadan Hill completely exposed and surrounded. They were slaughtered by the Williamite cavalry as they tried to get away, many of them having thrown away their weapons in order to run faster. One eyewitness, George Storey, said that bodies covered the Hill, and looked from a distance like a flock of sheep.

Aftermath

Estimates of the two army's losses vary. It is generally agreed that about 7000 men were killed at the battle. Some recent studies put the Williamite dead as high as 3000, with 4000 Jacobites killed. However the Williamite death toll released by them at the time was only 600. Many of the Jacobite dead were officers whom it was very difficult to replace. On top of that, another 4000 Jacobites either deserted or were taken prisoner. What was more, they had lost the better part of their equipment and supplies. For these reasons, Aughrim was the decisive battle of the Williamite war in Ireland. The city of Galway surrendered without a fight after the battle and the Jacobite's main army surrendered shortly afterwards at Limerick after a short siege. The battle according to one author, "seared into Irish consciousness", and became known in the Irish language tradition as Eachdhroim an áir - "Aughrim of the slaughter". The contemporary Gaelic poet Séamas Dall Mac Cuarta wrote of the Irish dead, "It is at Aughrim of the slaughter where they are to found, their damp bones lying uncoffined". Another poet wrote, "Our friends in vast numbers and languishing forms, left lifeless in the mountains and corroded by worms".

Since it marked the end of the Irish Catholic Jacobite resistance, Aughrim up until the early 19th century, was the focus of Loyalist celebrations in Ireland on the 12th of July – in particular the Orange Order. Thereafter, it was superseded by the Battle of the Boyne in commemorations on "the Twelfth" due to the switch to the Gregorian calendar. It has also been suggested that the Boyne was preferred because the Irish troops there were more easily presented as cowardly, whereas at Aughrim they generally fought bravely.

The Aughrim battlefield site has recently become the subject of controversy in Ireland over plans to build a new dual carriageway the N6 road, through the former battlefield. Historians, environmentalists and members of the Orange Order object to the destruction of the 1691 battlefield.

Source - Wikipedia

links:

<http://www.aughrimtrust.org/>

http://www.galway.net/galwayguide/history/hardiman/chapter6/battle_of_aughrim.

'I saw where Aughrim was fought, and I turned aside from the road to see the tree where St Ruth was killed. The half of it is gone like snuff.'

from The Kiltartan History Book

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11260>